

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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My Surprise Meeting With Gilbert Patten

By James H. Van Demark



Photo of Gilbert Patten taken during August 1941

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By James H. Van Demark

I always had a fond spot in my heart for the New England States, particularly the State of Maine, and made several auto trips there in the late 1930's and early 1940's. So when early August of 1941 came around, we decided to mosey up Maine way for a week.

That trip we went through the potato country of central Maine. Turning East near Bangor, came to Bar Harbor, where we stayed for several days. Had a delightful time seeing the points of interest thereabouts. One of the afternoons we drove to the top of Cadillac Mountain, where on a clear day several states can be seen from its summit.

One of the reasons that attracted us to Maine was its rugged shoreline and scenery. It emphasizes the fact that the early settlers there had to be rugged themselves. They and their fellow men and women who colonized Maine and the other New England States were a mighty force in the founding and development of this great country of ours.

While up in Maine that summer we called on a fellow member of the brotherhood, George French, who lives in the summer months on a farm near Lake Sebago. I remember he had just picked up about 40 old Diamond Dicks. Coming back down the coast we came through Camden, Maine. Driving thru the main street I saw the local Chamber of Commerce Office. The thought came to me that Camden was where Gilbert Patten spent July and August each year. Enquiring at the Commerce Office I was informed he had arrived in Camden a few days before and that I would find him at his home,

a two story white Colonial type of house, overlooking the water at the top of the highway on which I was driving. When we got there a neighbor told us Mr. Patten had gone down town, but would return soon.

We retraced our way down the hill toward town and parked. Something impelled me to cross the street against my wife's wishes, as she was impatient to get to Hampton Beach, where we were to stay over night. Probably most of the wives of other dime novel collectors take no interest in their husband's collecting. I know Mrs. Van Demark says we should all be examined to determine whether it is safe for us to be allowed to run around loose.

It was fortunate that I obeyed my hunch to stop. As I stood on the opposite corner I saw coming toward me a tall pleasant faced man, striding along as if he did not care whether school kept or not. He was wearing a soft hat, the brim turned down over one ear, the same way school boys wear theirs. He just exuded a confident feeling of well being with the world. I was attracted to him at once by his frank and friendly smile, which made me think he would be a good man to know. As he stepped beside me we mutually said "Hello." Extending our hands we shook and I said "Are you Mr. Gilbert Patten?" He answered saying "That's me."

I told him how in my young days I enjoyed reading his Frank and Dick Merriwell stories and still read them. He answered, saying "Do you know I cannot understand why people read such drivel." Told him that "drivel" was fine reading to me. I introduced

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him to my wife and we talked for nearly a half hour. The more we talked the more I liked him. He gave me the impression of being a very considerate man for others—but of having gone through many trials during his life.

I am sorry I cannot remember much that we talked about. It had mainly to do with his writings and how he came to get into the dime novel field.

Two questions I remember asking him, one was, "Were the various early characters you used such as Frank Merriwell, Bart Hodge, Jack Diamond, Harry Rattleton, Barney Mulloy, Ephraim Gallup and Hans Dunnerwust drawn from local people you knew at the time of writing these early stories?" He answered in the negative, and pointed his forefinger toward his head saying, "No, they all originated here."

The other question was in connection with Frank Merriwell's so-called "Double Shoot." Answered he said, "You know no one could throw a ball and make it curve two ways, 'out and in or in and out' on the same pitch." Continuing he said, "I will tell you how I came to evolve such a pitch for Frank Merriwell to use. A friend and myself in the late 1890's attended a National League game in Boston, having seats directly behind the catcher, where we could watch the pitcher's curves as they came toward the plate. During one of the innings, with a right handed hitter at the plate, the pitcher threw a slow outcurve to the batter. He swung as it was curving away from him, just tipping it with the end of the bat, causing it to be deflected and spin in a reverse motion toward the batter's feet, upon which my friend excitedly exclaimed 'That is the first time I ever saw a pitcher throw a double curve.' Mr. Patten said to himself 'double curve.'"

Continuing he told me, "That gave me an idea. At that time in my writing about Frank Merriwell, I had him in his early Freshman year at Yale and must give him a new type of pitch, that he could use when he got

in a tight spot in a ball game. My friend calling the pitch we had just seen a double curve set me thinking. All at once the words "Double shoot" came to me. That was how I came to evolve Frank Merriwell's Double Shoot, with which he won many ball games."

Having been a pitcher for many years I knew it was impossible to make a ball curve two ways on the same pitch.

He told us he had just arrived in Camden for the summer and how he missed his deceased wife, living alone in his big Camden house. After talking a bit longer he said, "Well I must be getting home." Shaking our hands and wishing us the best of luck he bid us goodbye and left for his home. I will never forget the memory of that kindly and friendly smile he gave us as he left, a 100 per cent gentleman of the old school all the time.

Before leaving home I had recently purchased Mr. Patten's new book, Mr. Frank Merriwell. I asked him if he would autograph it for me if I sent it on to him. Told me he would be going to the Crocker House in New London, Conn., in about three weeks, and if I sent it to him there, he would be very glad to autograph it. Sometime in September 1941, I sent the book on to him. It came back autographed as follows:

"To J. H. Van Demark,
With all good wishes

Gilbert Patten

"Burt L. Standish"

Creator of

Frank and Dick Merriwell
New London, Conn.

Sept. 20, 1941."

At the same time I received a nice letter from him, telling he remembered our meeting in Camden and how on that day he was not feeling very well.

Personally I liked his stories more than any others of the so called half dime nature. To me the term "dime" novels should never be associated with the Frank and Dick Merriwell stories. If the boys of today would read the Merriwell stories and emulate the

teachings Gilbert Patten always gave in those stories, there would be very little juvenile delinquency today. They would grow to be useful and upright citizens in their communities. I trust Gilbert Patten is living in Valhalla and carrying on the good he did here.

The End

C. H. FORBES- LINDSAY, A FAMOUS INDIA AUTHOR

By Roy B. Van Devier

(continued from last issue)

The Philippines under Spanish and American rules, by C. H. Forbes-Lindsay. Philadelphia: J. C. Winston Co., 1906.

America's Insular Possessions, by C. H. Forbes-Lindsay. Philadelphia: J. C. Winston Co., 1906. 2 vols.

John Smith, gentleman adventurer, by C. H. Forbes-Lindsay. With illustrations in color by Harry B. Lachman. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1907.

Bridge, and how to play it; every principle, point and play explained and illustrated by an expert, by Boston (pseud.) Philadelphia: Penn Publishing Co., 1908.

Washington, the city and the seat of government, by C. H. Forbes-Lindsay. J. C. Winston Co., 1908.

Daniel Boone: Backwoodsman, by C. H. Forbes-Lindsay. With illustrations by Frank McKernan. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1908.

Panama and the canal to-day, by Forbes-Lindsay, with fifty-three illustrations from recent photographs, and five maps. Boston: L. C. Page and Co., 1910.

The blue book of bridge and auction for beginner and expert, by Lennard Leigh (pseud.) (4th ed.) Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., (1911).

Earlier editions published under title: Bridge whist; how to play it.

Cuba and her people of to-day, by Forbes-Lindsay. Illustrated from original and selected photographs by the author. Boston: L. C. Page and Company, 1911.

Panama and the canal to-day, by Forbes Lindsay. With fifty-three illustrations from recent photographs, and five maps. New rev. ed. Boston: L. C. Page and Company, 1912.

Panama, the Isthmus and the canal, by Forbes Lindsay. Rev. ed., with new illustrations. Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1912.

Efficiency; practical lessons in life insurance salesmanship, by Forbes Lindsay. Los Angeles: Neale Printing Co., (1913).

The psychology of a sale; practical application of psychological principles to the processes of selling life insurance, by Forbes Lindsay. Los Angeles: Neale Printing Co. (1914).

Practical pointers; various phases of field work discussed in a manner designed to afford aid and suggestion to the man with the rate book. By Forbes Lindsay. New York: The Spectator Company (1916).

Efficiency, practical lessons in life insurance salesmanship, by Forbes Lindsay. 4th ed. New York: The Spectator Company, 1917.

Business insurance, a concise description of the adaptation of life insurance to corporations, business firms and individuals, by Forbes Lindsay. New York: The Spectator Company (1918).

Everyday efficiency; a practical guide to efficient living, written for the ordinary man and woman, by Forbes Lindsay. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company (1918).

"The Lindsay System" life insurance salesmanship; a complete course of instruction in personal and vocational efficiency. By Forbes Lindsay. Los Angeles: Times-Mirror printing and binding Co. (1918).

"The Lindsay System" life insurance salesmanship; a complete course of instruction in personal and vocational efficiency. By Forbes Lindsay. Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Printing and Binding Co. (1920).

The day's work and other matters of more or less interest to the life insurance man, by Forbes Lindsay. Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Printing and

Binding House, 1920.

Life insurance salesmanship, by Forbes Lindsay. Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Printing and Binding House, 1920.

Business insurance instructor, by Forbes Lindsay. San Gabriel, Calif., Forbes Lindsay sales service (1922) 2 vols.

Panama and the canal to-day; an historical account of the canal, with special reference to the early enterprises of the French company and the United States; the inception, construction, and completion of the canal; a survey of the first ten years of operation; and a history of the country to date, together with an account of its physical features and natural resources. By Forbes Lindsay, and Nev-in O. Winter. New rev. ed. Boston: L. C. Page and Company (1926). Earlier editions have title: Panama, the isthmus and the canal.

It is a pleasure to be able to express my appreciation to Miss Mary E. Norris and Mr. R. A. Brown, Sr., of the Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company of Los Angeles, California, who sent me a photocopy of an article on Mr. Forbes Lindsay, that was printed in their Pacific Mutual News in 1914.

To the efficient and courteous staffs of the New York and Pasadena Public Libraries are my heartfelt thanks.

Thanks are due also to the Library of Congress for sending me a list of Forbes-Lindsay's books.

Although I have called Mr. Forbes Lindsay a famous India author; he was also an American author and was a fine American citizen.

The End

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Dear Sir: Would you by any chance have the following for sale? Dick Merriwell's Backstop; DM on the Gridiron; DM's Debt and FM's Triumph. I have approximately 24 copies of the Frank Merriwell books for sale or trade. L. T. O'Desky, M. D. 2915 Lagrange St., Toledo, Ohio.

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 209. Joseph P. Wadleck, 211 Evans Drive, Ellwood City, Pa.
 210. Harriett Crawford Richardson, Box 1005, Socorro, New Mex. 87801

This year there was another drop in membership. It is hoped that the drop-outs are not foregoing subscribing because of bad editorship. The net decrease was 6. Three members died, Aubrey Egerton, Russell S. Bullock and H. A. Duchesne. 20 dropped for lack of interest: William Langell, S. B. Condon, Irven N. Arnold, E. Dudley Evans, Morris Brauner, Joseph Krajic, William L. Newman, Lewis F. Ehrlich, Henry L. Neubauer, Milton Collett, Mrs. Irene Gurman, Darrell C. Richardson, Frank E. Fuller, Warren A. Reed, Albert E. Johnson, Fred Zulli, Albert E. Farmer, Ralph F. Barney and W. H. Brooke. Fifteen new members were added to the rolls beginning with No. 194 above.

ALGER: FACTS AND FANCY

Seminar Is Highlight of Brandeis Alger Exhibit

Waltham, Mass. — The Library at Brandeis University here was the setting, on Wednesday, October 28, of the seminar, "Horatio Alger: Facts and Fancy," which was conducted by a panel of some of the nation's leading book collectors before an overflow audience.

In a pleasantly informal atmosphere, the discussion was presided over by Edward G. Levy, President of the Brandeis Bibliophiles, who is also Chairman of the Horatio Alger Society. His panel consisted of Ralph D. Gardner, Society member and author of "the" Alger biography; Phil Neufeld, member of the New York Stock Exchange and a prominent collector of Shakespeare; Ben Trustman, a Boston attorney, and Arthur Vershow, an engineer of Newton, Mass.

Following are some of the topics discussed: Alger as a best-selling author; did he produce literature or trash? His influence upon generations of readers; his influence on civic reform; Alger compared with his contemporaries; Alger's output: novels, poems, short stories, the Stratemeyer "completions," etc.: the increasing rarity and value of Alger's works; Horatio Alger as an American colloquialism; Alger pseudonyms; a study of the Alger Hero; could the Alger hero succeed today? The Alger story or plot formula; unfortunate fictions concerning Alger's personal life, and

a detailing of the true facts to set the record straight.

After the discussion by Mr. Levy and his panel members, there was time for a number of questions from the audience. The guests in addition to University faculty, students and book collectors who came from points in New York and New England, included Max Goldberg, the Horatio Alger Society's Eastern Representative; and Edward T. LeBlanc, editor of the Dime Novel Roundup.

The seminar was tape-recorded for broadcast, and news of it was carried by many New England newspapers. The exhibit and discussion was very well received by those in attendance. (From press release.)

CORRECTION

In the thumb nail sketch of Work and Win on the cover of the November issue of the Round-up it was wrongly stated that Work and Win ended with No. 1374. Mr. Ed Levy points out that Work and Win ended with No. 1382. My thanks to Mr. Levy for his eagle eye. No. 1374 was the last issue of Secret Service.—The Editor.

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